

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 18241 01 OF 02 192246Z

67

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 NEA-10 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 MC-02 ACDA-19 AEC-11

OMB-01 DRC-01 NIC-01 /163 W
----- 048298

R 191750Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9377

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION GENEVA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 18241

VIENNA FOR MBFR DEL: GENEVA FOR CSCE DEL

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MCAP, PFOR, GW, UR, NATO

SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER SPEAKS OUT

REF: BONN 16684 (LIMDIS)

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN LECTURES AT FRANKFURT AND
BONN, AND A NUMBER OF RECENT INTERVIEWS, DEFENSE
MINISTER LEBER HAS COME OUT PUNCHING AGAINST THOSE WHO
WOULD BUILD A EUROPEAN UNION "WITH ITS BACK TURNED TO
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PAGE 02 BONN 18241 01 OF 02 192246Z

THE UNITED STATES." LEBER WARNED THAT SUCH A POLICY

COULD ONLY RESULT IN UNILATERAL AMERICAN TROOP CUTS AND CONCOMITANT U.S./SOVIET BILATERIALISM,THUS AFFORDING THE SOVIETS AN OPENING TO HAMPER OR EVEN PREVENT FURTHER EUROPEAN UNIFICATION. SAYING "I HAVE NEVER BEFORE SPOKEN SO OPENLY",LEBER ALSO STRONGLY EMPHASIZED CONTINUING RUSSIAN ARMAMENT BUILD UP AND ASSERTED THAT THE WEST SHOULD AVOID CONCESSIONS IN MBFR NEGOTIATIONS THAT COULD"CEMENT ASYMMETRY"IN EAST/WEST BALANCE OF FORCES OR COULD PREJUDICE DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN UNION. FINALLY, LEBER DECLARED THAT THE SOVIET UNION "SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN A SINGLE PFENNIG" IN CREDITS AS LONG AS MOSCOW WAS FORCING THE WEST TO UNDERTAKE EXPENSIVE DEFENSE EFFORTS. GERMAN PRESS REACTION TO LEBER'S REMARKS HAS BEEN FAIRLY EXTENSIVE AND,SO FAR FAVORABLE. END SUMMARY.

1. OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED OVER POTENTIAL EFFECTS FOR ALLIANCE AND FRG SECURITY FROM RECENT COALITION OF EVENTS INCLUDING MIDEAST CRISIS, CONTINUING SOVIET ARMS BUILDUP AND U.S./EUROPEAN QUARRELING, DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER HAS COME OUT SWINGING. FOLLOWING UP ON MID-NOVEMBER SPEECHES ALERTING GERMAN PUBLIC TO UNWARRENTED "DETENTE EUPHORIA" AT GRASSROOTS (REFTEL), LEBER USED FRANKFURT LECTURE TO SELECTED GROUP OF PUBLISHERS AND SUBSEQUENT PRESENTATIONS AND INTERVIEWS IN BONN TO LAY DOWN TOUGH LINE ON ALLIED DEFENSE NEEDS, MBFR AND CREDITS FOR RUSSIA.

2. LEBER BEGAN HIS FRANKFURT SPEECH BY SAYING THAT "WITHOUT ITS TIES IN THE WEST, THE FRG WOULD BE LIKE A DRIED LEAF BEING BLOWN TO AND FRO BY THE WIND BETWEEN EAST AND WEST." LEBER EMPHASIZED THAT WESTERN EUROPE IS NOT A MILITARY POWER WHICH COULD DEFEND ITSELF FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE WITHOUT THE AMERICAN TROOP PRESENCE IN EUROPE AND ITS NUCLEAR UMBRELLA. HE SAID THAT IT WAS IN THE U.S. INTEREST TO ASSURE THAT "THIS EUROPE WILL NOT FALL UNDER THE CONTROL OR THE WILL OF THE SOVIET UNION." THE MILITARY POWER OF THE SOVIET UNION, SUPPLEMENTED BY THE ECONOMIC CAPACITY OF WESTERN EUROPE, COULD IN LEBER'S VIEW, "EVEN THREATEN UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 BONN 18241 01 OF 02 192246Z

THE END OF U.S. INDEPENDENCE."

3. LEBER THEN ADDRESSED THOSE "VOICES WHICH I HAVE HEARD ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS EXPRESSING DOUBTS OVER THE FUTURE OF THE ALLIANCE. HE TERMED MISGUIDED THOSE WHO SEE THE U.S. SUPERPOWER INTERESTED EITHER IN A CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THE SOVIET UNION OR WITH WEST EUROPEAN

NATIONALSTATES. SAYING THIS APPROACH
CORRESPONDED TO NEITHER PAST EXPERIENCES NOR TO FUTURE
POLITICAL NECESSITIES, LEBER EMPHASIZED THAT "THIS
EUROPE MAY NOT BECOME A EUROPEAN UNION WHICH TURNS ITS
BACK ON OR DISTANCES ITSELF FROM AMERICA." LEBER
WARNED THAT BUILDING A EUROPEAN UNION IN THIS WAY
WOULD ONLY WEAKEN THE WEST, FEED PRESSURES FOR UNILATER-
AL AMERICAN TROOP REDUCTIONS AND ENCOURAGE THOSE
AMERICANS WISHING TO NEGOTIATE BILATERALLY WITH THE
SOVIETS OVER THE HEADS OF EUROPE. SUCH A DEVELOPMENT
WOULD, IN LEBER'S VIEW, "OF NECESSITY MEAN THAT EUROPE

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PAGE 01 BONN 18241 02 OF 02 192314Z

67

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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 18241

WOULD NOT COME INTO EXISTANCE BECAUSE A EUROPE
SEPARATED FROM AMERICA WOULD BE HAMPERED OR PREVENTED
FROM UNIFICATION BY THE SOVIET UNION."

4. TURNING TO EAST-WEST FORCE BALANCE, LEBER STRESSED
THE DANGER OF CONTINUING RUSSIAN ARMS BUILD-UP,
SAYING THAT "ONLY A ROMANTIC WOULD IGNORE THE NECESSITY
FOR CAUTION IN THE FACE OF THE SOVIET MILITARY THREAT."
LEBER SAID THE WARSAW PACT HAS A "SLIGHT SUPERIORITY"
IN GROUND FORCES, A SUPERIORITY OF BETWEEN 4.5 TO 1 OR
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PAGE 02 BONN 18241 02 OF 02 192314Z

4 TO 1 IN TANKS AND AIRCRAFT. HE SAID THE WESTERN
GOAL IS TO REDUCE THIS WP SUPERIORITY--"TO DISMANTLE
THE IMBALANCE OF FORCES WHICH THE EAST WANTS TO PRE-
SERVE." THE SOVIET GOAL, ACCORDING TO LEBER, IS TO
"CEMENT ASYMMETRY." IF THE TWO SIDES PRESENTLY WERE OF
EQUAL STRENGTH, LEBER SAID THERE WOULD BE CONSIDERABLE
MANEUVERING ROOM FOR BOTH SIDES TO NEGOTIATE OVER
"DEEPER, I SAY MUCH DEEPER (REDUCTIONS)." LEBER ADDED:
"BUT IT'S NOT OUR WORLD...THE WEST HAS JUST
SUFFICIENT FORCES TO COVER ITS TERRITORY, ALTHOUGH
THERE IS OF COURSE A CERTAIN ROOM FOR MANEUVER." WHAT
IS IMPORTANT IS THAT THE WEST DOES NOT GO BEYOND A
CERTAIN LINE IN RISKING ITS SECURITY.

5. AS FOR MBFR, THE DEFMIN

WARNED AGAINST ADVANCE CONCESSIONS THAT COULD
WEAKEN THE EAST-WEST FORCE BALANCE, WESTERN DEFENSE
CAPABILITY OR COULD HAVE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR
EVENTUAL WEST EUROPEAN DEFENSE COOPERATION.

6. IN CLOSING, LEBER SAID THE BUNDESWEHR "IS NOT AN
OFFENSIVE ATTACK ARMY AND WILL BE NEITHER SO TRAINED
OR EQUIPPED...BUT IT MUST BE ABLE TO DEFEND AND TO
MAKE ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ALLIANCE." HE SAID THE
SOVIETS EXPEND CONSIDERABLE PORTION OF THE RUSSIAN
GNP FOR ARMAMENTS AND "CANNOT EXPECT THAT THE WEST WILL
CLOSE THIS GAP IN SOVIET CAPITAL REQUIREMENTS TO THE
NEGLECT OF OUR OWN DEFENSE CAPABILITY." SPEAKING
DEC 17 IN BONN, LEBER ADDED THAT THE SOVIET UNION SHOULD
NOT BE GIVEN "A SINGLE PFENNING" IN CREDITS AS LONG AS
IT WAS FORCING THE WEST TO UNDERTAKE AN EXPENSIVE
DEFENSE EFFORT BY CONTINUING TO BUILD UP ITS ARMS.

7. DEFENSE MINISTRY SOURCES HAVE CONFIRMED THIS LATTER
COMMENT, WHICH HAS RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE PRESS ATTEN-
TION, ALSO FROM SOVIETMEDIA. INITIAL
GERMAN EDITORIAL COMMENTS IN THE FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE
THE FRANKFURTER NEUE PRESSE
DIE WELT,.
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PAGE 03 BONN 18241 02 OF 02 192314Z

ANDTHE MUENCHNER MERKUR HAVE TERMED LEBER'S FRANK
REMARKS OVERDUE AND VERY MUCH TO THE POINT. I
POINTEDLY, FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEIOBSERVED
THAT "LEBER'S PLAIN LANGUAGE IS NOT ONLY DESIGNED FOR
THE EARS OF THE KREMLIN."

8. CSU DEPUTY ZIMMERMANN, FORMER BUNDESTAG DEFENSE
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, HAS ADVANCED WRITTEN QUESTION
AS TO WHETHER GERMAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS LEBER'S
POSITION AGAINST CAPITAL AID TO USSR. WE UNDERSTAND
THIS MATTER WILL BE DEBATED IN THE BUNDESTAG AFTER THE
CHRISTMAS RECESS.
HILLENBRAND

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 DEC 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BONN18241
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731217/aaaaamaz.tel
Line Count: 248
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BONN 16684 (LIMDIS)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kellerpr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24-Aug-2001 by thomasv0>; APPROVED <28-Aug-2001 by kellerpr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEFENSE MINISTER LEBER SPEAKS OUT
TAGS: MCAP, PFOR, GE, UR, NATO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005